

## **STATE OF CALIFORNIA SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVANCY - RECOMMENDATION**

### **Sierra Nevada Conservancy Grant Program Safe Drinking Water, Water Quality and Supply, Flood Control, River and Coastal Protection Act of 2006 (Proposition 84)**

**Subregion:** NORTH-CENTRAL                      **County:** PLUMAS

**Applicant:** SIERRA INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT

**Project Title:** DEVELOPING A WORKING LANDSCAPES WATERSHED MANAGEMENT PLAN  
FOR THE ALMANOR BASIN

**Application Number:** SNC 070201

### **PROJECT SCOPE**

This project will develop a Watershed Management Plan to protect water quality and habitat values in the Lake Almanor Basin, which encompasses 320,000 acres mostly in Plumas County but also extending into Lassen and Shasta Counties. The applicant will work closely with the Almanor Basin Watershed Advisory Group (ABWAC), as well as various agencies and the public, to identify area needs and priorities for inclusion in the plan. The project encompasses three sets of deliverables:

- 1) Develop a comprehensive Almanor Basin Watershed Management Plan to protect water quality and habitat values.
  - Continue facilitating monthly ABWAC committee and sub-committee meetings throughout the duration of the project to identify, discuss and decide on plan contents;
  - Hold periodic workshops and fieldtrips involving ABWAC, agency, and public participation;
  - Produce a watershed newsletter and newspaper articles to apprise the public about planning issues and progress and elicit public participation;
  - Produce a comprehensive Watershed Management Plan for presentation to county governments through ABWAC.
- 2) Develop and implement a continuous and comprehensive water quality monitoring program for Lake Almanor to identify current conditions and trends.
  - Collect and record existing water quality data on the Sierra Institute website, and make available to the public;
  - Develop a set of water quality monitoring protocols for a citizen/student monitoring program;
  - Complete an information kiosk and library information center at the Chester Library with water quality database access, virtual watershed tours, and other watershed information;
  - Launch a local citizen's lake and tributary water quality monitoring program as part of a public outreach and education effort, to involve monitoring by students.

- 3) Explore ways to secure values of “ecosystem services” of the watershed resources and return those values as investment in the watershed, including water monitoring and habitat restoration.
  - Applicant will consult with ABWAC, PG&E, the U.S. Forest Service, and local timber companies to identify potential methods to capture and invest the values of ecosystem services provided by the Basin;
  - Develop a watershed ecosystem-services investment report.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Approve at a reduced amount of \$92,329 to reflect funding already received from Plumas County in support of ABWAC activities in the Basin. There is no existing watershed management plan for the Almanor Basin, despite the fact that Lake Almanor is the third largest reservoir in California and a significant source of water for the state. Urban runoff, erosion and sedimentation is affecting watershed habitat, water quality and aquatic habitat in the Basin. In addition, the Department of Water Resources halted water quality monitoring of Lake Almanor as of the beginning of 2008. This project helps address water quality and habitat issues by using public and agency input to develop a watershed plan, initiating a citizen-based water quality monitoring program, and exploring the potential to increase investment in the watershed by valuing ecosystem services provided by the Basin.

### **LETTERS OF SUPPORT**

Almanor Basin Watershed Advisory Committee (ABWAC)  
 Collins Pine Company  
 Plumas County Board of Supervisors Resolution #08-7460  
 Sherrie Thrall, Plumas County Supervisor, District 3  
 Robert Meacher, Plumas County Supervisor, District 2

### **PROJECT SCHEDULE**

<b>DETAILED PROJECT DELIVERABLES</b>	<b>TIMELINE</b>
18 monthly meetings with ABWAC	July 2008 – Dec. 2009
18 monthly meetings with ABWAC Wildlife subcommittee	July 2008 – Dec. 2009
18 monthly meetings with ABWAC Land Use subcommittee	July 2008 – Dec. 2009
8 bi-monthly meetings w/ ABWAC Water Quality subcommittee	July 2008 – Dec. 2009
4 subcommittee/public workshops/fieldtrips	July 2008, July 2009
4 management plan public workshops	July 2008, July 2009
4 watershed tours	July 2008; July 2009
Progress report	January 2009
Completed kiosk and library information at Chester Library	March 2009
Watershed newsletter	Quarterly, beginning July 2008

Progress report	July 2009
Minimum 12 educational newspaper articles on workshops, field tours, and status of watershed management plan	ongoing
Water quality database refinement and updates	ongoing
Lake Almanor water quality monitoring program protocols	March 2009
Implement Lake Almanor water quality monitoring program	May 2009
Completed Watershed Management Plan	December 2009
Watershed ecosystem-services investment report	December 2009
<b>FINAL REPORT</b>	<b>January 31, 2010</b>

### PROJECT COSTS

<b>PROJECT BUDGET CATEGORIES</b>	<b>TOTAL SNC FUNDING</b>
Management plan development	43,740
Ecosystem services investment research and plan development	23,550
Administration	11,339
Travel	3,500
Workshop/monitoring training	900
Equipment, including laptop, GIS software upgrade/subscription	1,700
Chester Library Kiosk/watershed display	500
Supplies for meetings and workshops	1,200
Printing – meetings, workshops	1,500
Special project reports/brochures	2,700
Postage/mailing expenses	950
Newspaper ads/publicity	750
<b>GRAND TOTAL</b>	<b>\$92,329</b>

## 2. PROJECT SUMMARY

Lake Almanor Basin sits at the northern end of the Sierra Nevada Mountains in Plumas and Lassen Counties, encompassing just under 320,000 acres. With a capacity of 1.1 million acre-feet, Almanor is the third largest reservoir in California. Almanor's idyllic mountain setting has made it a premier destination for recreationists and luxury homeowners. As a result, the Almanor Basin is facing explosive development; up to eleven thousand new lots are ready or near ready to build upon, which would more than triple the current number of homes in the basin.

Urban runoff from construction sites and impermeable surfaces like roads, parking areas, and rooftops is negatively affecting water quality. Sedimentation from new development is a growing problem. Illegal roads created by OHV riders have compacted soil, increased sediment runoff, disrupted breeding birds, and served as a point of entry for exotic species. A lack of coordinated basin management to address critical issues like pollution from stormwater runoff, failing lake-side septic systems, and extensive residential development threatens water quality and critical habitat.

The purpose of this project is to develop a much needed Almanor watershed management plan, work with local citizens to help establish the plan, and work with citizens and agency experts to establish protocols and implement a water quality monitoring program for Lake Almanor. This project will also explore means and advance ways to secure greater investment in the basin through the recovery of ecosystem service values by working with Plumas County, basin residents, PG&E, the U.S. Forest Service, and private land owners like Collins Pine Company.

The total cost of this 18-month project is \$188,335. In-kind support will account for \$41,000 of the total, and we have a match from Plumas County for \$22,334 through June 2008. We request \$125,001 from the Sierra Nevada Conservancy for this project.

### *Specific components of the project include:*

- ***Develop a comprehensive Almanor Basin watershed management plan*** to protect the water quality of Lake Almanor and its tributaries, and critical basin habitat. The plan will be developed over the first 12 months, and finalized by month 18 working with a citizens advisory group and county and other officials.
- ***Develop and implement a continuous and comprehensive water quality monitoring program*** to identify current conditions and trends in Lake Almanor.
- 3. ***Advance basin stewardship through outreach and education efforts*** including workshops, field trips, educational newspaper articles, and a watershed newsletter to help the public become more involved in the management and monitoring of the lake.
- 3. ***Work with partners to explore ways to secure "ecosystem services" investment.*** Identify mechanisms and work with institutional partners to establish investment associated with ecosystem services in the Almanor Basin to support monitoring, restore damaged land and habitat, support continued basin coordination, and secure easements and conservation dedications where needed to protect biophysical and cultural values.